

PRESS RELEASE



The Cleveland Museum of Art

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YEAR IN REVIEW

February 22 - April 8, 1984

Two hundred seventy-one works of art were acquired by The Cleveland Museum of Art in 1983 and are assembled in the Year in Review exhibition from February 22 through April 8. Among their number are masterworks of genius as well as exceptional objects and noteworthy ones representative of their time and place. This Year in Review exhibits works acquired under two directors: Sherman E. Lee, who retired on June 30, 1983, and Evan H. Turner, who assumed the post on July 1, 1983. Each followed this Museum's long-established practice of presenting to the accessions committee of the Board of Trustees only works of art jointly and unqualifiedly recommended by the director and the appropriate curator. The high standards of quality that have consistently distinguished this Museum's permanent collections continue to be apparent in the scope and balance of the 1983 acquisitions.

A small and select group of European paintings extends the collection significantly. The Museum's holdings already include works by Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) and Etienne-Pierre-Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867), but the 1983 acquisitions disclose further aspects of their artistry: the immediacy of the Flemish master's small oil sketch, The Bear Hunt, and the large, assured vision of the Barbizon painter's Setting Sun. Entering the Museum collection for the first time are important works by three eighteenth-century artists, each a leading painter in his native country: The Fall of Simon Magus, a dramatic episode by the

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2-year in review

Italian painter Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787); the evocative, textured Still Life with Fish, Bread, and Kettle by the Spaniard Luis Meléndez (1716-1780); and what is probably the first painting by the German Jacob Philipp Hackert (1737-1807) to enter an American public collection, his lucid, large-scale View of the Solfatara and the Bay of Pozzuoli, painted shortly after the turn of the century.

Two paintings must be singled out among the modern and contemporary acquisitions. While collecting an excellent group of Cubist masterworks, the Museum has been slower to add boldly colored paintings of the Fauves, the first avant-garde movement of this century which emerged in 1905 and gave way to Cubism by 1908. The Houses of Parliament and Westminster Bridge by André Derain (1880-1954), one of the three most important of the original Fauves, thus makes a significant contribution. Alex Katz's Impala brings a well-known canvas by a major American figurative painter (b. 1927) into the collection.

Photographs take a prominent place in this Year in Review. The Museum purchased seven choice prints by Paul Strand (1890-1976), selecting from among a group he had kept for himself because of their importance and quality. Spanning his career from 1914 to 1956, they trace his evolution as an artist and confirm his stature and achievement in the history of American photography. Other exceptional acquisitions are photographs by two nineteenth-century masters, one by Peter Henry Emerson (1856-1936), the other a portrait of the popular writer Alexandre Dumas Père by Gaspard-Félix Tournachon, who was known as Nadar (1820-1910).

The additions to the Museum's celebrated collections of Oriental art maintain high standards for quality and balance. Offered at auction as a weak example of thirteenth-century craftsmanship, a Chinese Bodhisattva, suspected by Dr. Lee to be a much earlier and finer piece, has emerged from six layers of old paint with a substantial part of its original glossy black lacquer surface intact. Now

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3-year in review

judged to be T'ang Dynasty, from about 800 AD, this graceful figure is virtually without parallel in the Western world and is one of the earliest known Chinese sculptures to survive in the fragile dry lacquer medium. A thirteenth-century Japanese sculpture in excellent condition, carved in wood with lacquer and cut-gold decoration, represents a serene Nikkō Bosatsu: The Sun Bodhisattva.

The Oriental paintings are as various as Tiger Family, an imposing pair of screens by the Japanese painter Kishi Ganku (1749/56-1838); a spirited Japanese scroll by Matsumura Goshun (1752-1811) which happily combines poetry and painting to commemorate A Poetic Gathering; and the contemplative High Mountain and Flowing Water, an album leaf by the renowned Chinese Southern Sung figure painter, Liu Sung-nien (ca. 1150-after 1225). A Chinese tripod ewer adorned with an animated dragon's head is a singular example of sixth-century bronze casting. Japanese tea taste ceramics, Chinese tomb figures, Korean pottery, and other objects from China, Japan, India, Nepal, Tibet, and Thailand complete the purchases and gifts in this area.

Prints and drawings constitute another strength of the Museum collections, but a lesser known one because fragile works on paper must be protected from light and thus cannot be on permanent exhibition. Acquisitions in this area bridge the centuries from the fifteenth to the twentieth and encompass works by artists from Japan, America, and most European countries. Of extraordinary significance is Nicolas Poussin's (1594-1665) poignant Study for Extreme Unction, a haunting wash drawing related to his celebrated series of paintings on the seven sacraments. The major print acquisition of the year is Edvard Munch's (1863-1944) powerful lithograph, The Sin, a trial proof by an accomplished printmaker and painter. Prints in series range from Allart van Everdingen's (1621-1675) charming Renard the Fox to Jasper Johns's Savarin Suite, variations on one of his hallmark images and a generous gift from The Print Club of Cleveland.

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4-year in review

A small but fine collection of Indonesian textiles, now on display in the Museum's textile corridor, has just received its most important addition to date: an extremely rare nineteenth-century sarong from Southern Sumatra which juxtaposes woven geometric patterns with fantastic creatures embroidered in a fluid style. More than seventy wool, linen, and silk fragments transform an already distinguished collection of Egyptian and Near Eastern textiles to an outstanding one.

Other noteworthy objects entered the collection from disparate times and places. From the middle of the fifteenth pre-Christian century come two bronze Egyptian mirrors, perhaps from the same workshop, which are among the finest known of their type. Their handles are cast in the form of caryatids or weight-bearing figures--one as Bes, the vigorous, lion-headed domestic god, the other as a slender concubine. The most striking additions to the Medieval collection are four jewel-like miniatures excised from a French manuscript of the Apocalypse from around 1295, perhaps made for Eleanor, daughter of Edward I of England. Another outstanding piece is a gold Double Armed Reliquary Cross fashioned either in the Rhine Valley or Northern Italy in the twelfth century. Twenty-nine eighteenth-century French ceramics are the most recent in a series of gifts from the late R. Henry Norweb. On display in Gallery A through June 3, they include delicate pieces of soft-paste porcelain and trompe l'oeil objects cleverly contrived of faience to fool the eye with convincing imitations of food and other materials. A wooden Royal Chair, alive with vigorously carved symbols of royal power such as leopards, pythons, and enemy heads, is the Museum's most impressive piece of African tribal art from the late nineteenth-century Cameroons.

A gallery talk will be presented in the Year in Review exhibition on Wednesday, February 29, and repeated on Sunday, March 4, both at 1:30 pm. The February issue of The Bulletin of The Cleveland Museum of Art serves as a catalogue for the exhibition.

For additional information or photographs, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.